



COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

ANÍBAL ACEVEDO VILÁ
GOVERNOR

April 18, 2006

Ms. Dorcas R. Hardy
Chairman
WHCoA Policy Committee
4350 East-West Highway, 3rd Floor
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Ms. Hardy:

As Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, I want to thank you for the opportunity that the bi-partisan Policy Committee has given us to consider and comment the preliminary report of the 2005 WHCoA held December 11-14, 2005 in Washington D.C. We have received the Resolutions Workbook and will refer to specific resolutions addressed in that document for the purpose of this letter.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico congratulates the accomplishments of the Policy Committee, and its Advisory Committee through the process and outcomes of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCA), and has no objections to the top voted fifty resolutions. Among these Resolutions, we considered the implementation of some, as stemming primarily from federal level initiatives (e.g., Resolutions: # 4, # 17, # 50, # 51, # 4, # 67, # 19, # 56, # 25, # 59, # 48, # 62, #31, # 10, # 32, and #47).

We consider the following Resolutions to be the ten of most importance for the elder population in Puerto Rico: # 22, # 41, # 36, #12, # 33, # 59, # 26 # 37, # 39 and # 14. The first two coincide with the top ten voted by delegates at the WHCA. The additional six correspond to expressed priorities of our elder population during the public hearings conducted prior to the Conference. The Commonwealth has already begun to take action on some of the issues addressed by these resolutions and will welcome their integration in the Older Americans Act (OAA) as a crucial enhancement of our efforts. Our allocation of resources will continue in support of the issues addressed by the following resolutions:

#22 Transportation for Older Americans...

Through our State Agency on Aging we have initiated and will continue to expand a transportation project for seniors and individuals with disabilities living in rural isolated communities.

#41 Support Geriatric Education for all Healthcare Professionals, Paraprofessionals...

We have approved legislation to require education on basic competencies for the provision of care to our elders for all service providers, through a mandatory Certificate and ongoing continued education courses. We are currently working on refining the implementation process, and hope to expand the scope of this initiative in keeping with this proposition.

#36 Improve Recognition, Assessment, and Treatment of Mental Illness...

As part of this administration's commitment to further comprehensive health reform for Puerto Rico, we have recently initiated a renewed service model for Mental Health, currently been validated in several regions throughout the Island where by the issue addressed in this proposition will be attended to.

#12 Promote Incentives for Older Workers...

Our administration is currently organizing an interagency work group headed by the Secretary of the Labor Department to integrate existing legislation and programs providing incentives to older workers in order to articulate a more coherent and effective public policy on this matter.

#33 Promote the importance of Nutrition in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention...

Through our State Agency on Aging we have initiated and will continue to support the operation of Senior Centers throughout the Island and to supplement the nutritional services and education with other programs such as stipends for elders to purchase fresh produce at local farmers markets, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture.

#26 Support Older Adult Caregivers Raising their Relatives Children...

The existing Administration on Aging (AoA) Caregiver Support Program has made a landmark contribution in support of our elders and caregivers in community settings. The State Agency on Aging is currently undertaking a needs assessment in collaboration with the Department of Education to

structure an integrated offering of support services to grandparents raising children, an increasing occurrence among younger elders caring for their parents as well.

#37 Prevent Disease and Promote Healthier Lifestyles through Educating Providers and Consumers on Consumer Health Care...

Our State Agency on Aging has undertaken several initiatives in response to this issue, including a recent expansion of a program to train and provide incentives to community based Pharmacists to conduct educational group sessions and on-to-one assessment and counseling of elders and their caregivers on proper medication use. Through the CMS sponsored State Health Insurance Program (SHIP), the Agency has also embarked in an Island-wide educational campaign to providers and consumers as well as one-on-one counseling for Medicare beneficiaries on the new medication benefits and service programs now available.

#21 Support Older Drivers to Retain Mobility and Independence...

In collaboration with the Traffic Safety Commission our State Agency on Aging has previously undertaken the pilot design of an adapted Older Driver Training Program, which we hope to develop into an ongoing program.

#14 Expand Opportunities for Developing Innovative Housing Designs...

Our State Agency on Aging has spearheaded a collaborative initiative with the Housing Department to promote private sector investment in Assisted Living Housing for the elderly and disabled, together with the promotion of low cost technological adaptations to existing housing in order to extend the offer of independent dwellings in the community for these populations.

We are hopeful that most of these Resolutions be given the corresponding priority for inclusion in the legislative process leading to the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

Sincerely,



Anibal Acevedo Vila